

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent we now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING TONY POMERLEAU'S GENEROSITY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have spoken many times on the floor of the Senate about Antonio Pomerleau of Burlington, VT. As my wife, Marcelle, has often said, he is her "favorite Uncle Tony." Given his extraordinary service and dedication to the people of our state, it is safe to say that he is every Vermonter's "favorite Uncle Tony."

Tony has done so much for so many, from his enormously generous contribution to help the survivors of Hurricane Irene, through his constant and generous support of our Vermont National Guard and their families, to most recently his large donation to the Community Health Centers of Burlington, in memory of his daughter, Anne Marie.

Marcelle and I of course knew her cousin Anne Marie, and we warmly remember her spirit and her life. Even though health problems nearly immobilized her toward the end, the cheer, love and friendship she gave—not only to members of the family but to everyone else—was a treasure in all of our lives. Tony continues to lift Vermonters' spirits and make lives better in so many ways. I have an article from The Burlington Free Press that highlights yet another token of Uncle Tony's generosity.

I ask unanimous consent that this article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Mar. 6, 2013]

POMERLEAU GIVES TO HEALTH CENTERS—COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS OF BURLINGTON RECEIVE \$200,000 GIFT

"You people deserve the thanks for the outstanding work you do," Burlington businessman Tony Pomerleau told a small crowd Wednesday afternoon at the Riverside Health Center. "I just come up with the money, that's all."

Applause and cheers greeted Pomerleau's announcement of a \$200,000 donation to Community Health Centers of Burlington in memory of his daughter, Anne Marie.

"This is a large gift for us," beamed Jack Donnelly, the executive director of the centers.

He said the sum would be dedicated to the nonprofit's Homeless Health Care Program.

Specifically, Donnelly said, it will fund improvements to the basement at Safe Harbor Health Center at South Winooski Avenue and King Street—one of the Community Health Centers' four facilities in Burlington.

Director of Community Relations Alison Calderara summarized the centers' mission: It provides sliding-scale health, dental and human services; and includes low-cost prescription programs, social work support and interpreters for non-English speaking patients.

Soon after Wednesday's fanfare subsided, it segued into mid-day sandwiches.

The philanthropist made himself comfortable in an armchair and indulged in a little storytelling.

It turns out that Pomerleau has good reason to be grateful for easy access to health care: When he was 2 or 3 years old he tumbled into the basement of his family's summer kitchen.

"I wore a cast iron brace for four years," he said.

His parents regularly took the boy 50 miles north by train to Sherbrooke, Quebec, for treatment.

For Pomerleau, who is in his mid-90s now, the half-dozen years after the accident remain a blank.

"The lights came on when I was seven or eight," he said. "The doctors told my parents I might reach 10, but I'd never reach 12."

"I'd been awake, of course," Pomerleau continued. "I'd learned English in school; I'd grown—but I don't remember anything."

"Now, people say I remember too much," he said.

SEQUESTER MITIGATION

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the bipartisan UdallCollins flexibility plan, which is designed to help mitigate the damaging effects of the automatic spending cuts our country now faces, commonly called the sequester. If left unchanged, these indiscriminate sequester cuts will undermine services that hardworking families rely on and harm our economic growth during this fragile recovery.

So what is the sequester and how did our politics deteriorate so badly that we are left to watch as this self-inflicted wound is leveled on our country? It boils down to two problems that both Democrats and Republicans readily acknowledge deserve our attention: our national deficit and debt. In some ways it is just as the President has described it: a matter of pure math. The Federal Government is spending more than it is taking in and that picture is not projected to change in the long run—in fact, it is projected to get worse.

And this has been a long time coming. In 2010, I was part of a core group of Senators who urged the White House to establish a bipartisan fiscal commission that would help us address our debt and deficit. The administration heard our call and established a debt and deficit panel to recommend a balanced and comprehensive way to get our fiscal house in order. Their plan, as you know Mr. President, is now commonly referred to as the Simpson-Bowles plan. Former Republican Wyoming Senator Al Simpson and Former Clinton Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles led the effort and both Democrats and Republicans here in the Senate embraced the framework that pushed for spending cuts, raising revenue and responsibly reforming our entitlements. With bipartisan support for such a balanced plan, it should have been an open-and-shut case, which is why I endorsed the idea and repeatedly encouraged my colleagues to bring it to the floor for a vote.

The problem is that it doesn't just take some bipartisanship to get any-

thing done around here; it takes a lot of bipartisanship—60 votes in the Senate and 218 votes in the House of Representatives. Ideologues on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers have since dug in their heels, totally unwilling to set aside differences to reach a compromise.

So that brings us back to the sequester. Because Congress cannot agree on a balanced and bipartisan plan to reduce the deficit, we are left with these automatic and blunt across-the-board cuts.

There is no doubt that we must reduce the deficit, which is why I have been saying for months that we ought to bring forward the Simpson-Bowles plan and find a way to achieve deficit reduction in a more thoughtful and strategic way. That approach would include additional revenue and shoring up our entitlements. In theory, many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle agree with this approach. But at the end of the day, there just aren't enough of them with the courage to support a balanced, deficit-reduction plan. We owe it to the American people to be honest. Let's just acknowledge that we have reached an impasse.

And until there are enough Members willing to make the difficult decisions we are left with these terrible and indiscriminate cuts to our Government. Let's get it straight: the sequester is not a solution. It is neither smart, nor strategic—it wasn't designed to be. I firmly believe that the sequester will leave our Government frayed and our economy weakened.

The sheer magnitude of the sequester cuts will not only damage our economy, but will also put our national security at a level of risk that could have been avoided had Congress exercised the courage to pass a bipartisan and balanced plan. We can do better, and the Udall-Collins plans suggests that there are more reasonable ways to find these savings than implementing blunt, thoughtless cuts.

Our plan says, "Wait a minute, if we really have to live with these terrible cuts, shouldn't we at least be strategic about how and where we make them?"

The proposal that Senator COLLINS and I have put forward is not about providing flexibility to choose between cutting children's education funding in New York City versus Kansas City. Our plan simply provides the administration and Congress with the flexibility to look at where our Government's highest-value investments are so we can continue to invest in them, while cutting back in areas that do not provide mission-critical value for Americans.

While there are still difficult decisions to make and tough choices to confront, the best way forward is through a collaborative process between the administration and Congress—as the Udall-Collins plan would provide.

Last week, the Senate voted down a politically motivated flexibility proposal. Senator COLLINS and I are not